

# The Civil Rights Era

## Define:

Prejudice-

unfavorable opinion or feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge or thought.

Racism -

belief that differ among the various human racial groups determine cultural or ind. achieve. (usually idea that one's own race is superior)

Segregation-

legal separation of races

Integration-

mixing of races

## What are Civil Rights?

- The rights of citizens to political and social freedom and equality
- Although many important gains were made by African American's after the Civil War, when Reconstruction ended many of these gains were lost. Decades of inequality, and injustice followed.

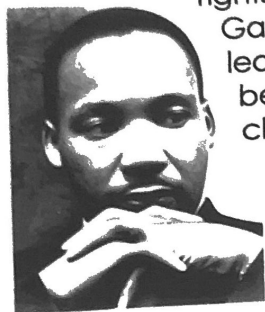
## Recalling Segregation

- Plessy v. Ferguson - 1896
- Supreme Court Case that legalizes segregation, stating that separation of races as long as facilities are "separate but equal"
  - o Segregation becomes the way of life throughout the South and many other parts of the U.S.
- Finally after decades of little progress, after WWII the struggle for equality and civil rights picked up strength. This begins the Civil Rights Movement or Era.
- The NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored people) formed during the Progressive era leads the fight
- They challenged laws and brought legal action up to the Supreme Court when necessary.
- Thurgood Marshall - 1938 - a brilliant lawyer lead the NAACP, and attacked Segregation using the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment (equal protection of the laws for all) to attack the foundations of Segregation. - Ultimate
- Goal - Integration - an end to racial segregation

# THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

## Nonviolent Resistance (NVR)

Civil rights activists in the 1950s and 1960s chose nonviolence as a way to gain legal rights for African Americans. Inspired by the successes of Mohandas Gandhi, leader of the the Indian independence movement, civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. believed that nonviolence was the best way to address African American inequality. Why did they choose nonviolence? How did they implement it?



Dr. King wrote the *Six Principles of Nonviolence* and they became the rule for much of the protests during the Civil Rights Movement. Read them out loud.

- Principle One:** Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people
- Principle Two:** Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding
- Principle Three:** Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice, not people
- Principle Four:** Nonviolence holds that suffering can educate and transform
- Principle Five:** Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate
- Principle Six:** Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice

**SNCC** SNCC [pronounced "Snick"], the **S**tudent **N**onviolent **C**oordinating **C**ommittee started in 1960. It was formed by students, both black and white. Members were involved in the lunch-counter sit-ins and other protests throughout the South. Read the "SNCC Statement of Purpose" and answer the following questions.

### SNCC Statement of Purpose

We affirm the philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of our purpose, the presupposition of our faith, and the manner of our action. Nonviolence as it grows from Judaic-Christian traditions seeks a social order of justice permeated by love. Integrating of human endeavor represents the crucial first step towards such a society. SNCC believes that through nonviolence, courage displaces fear; love transforms hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice; hope ends despair. Peace dominates war; faith reconciles doubt. Mutual regard cancels enmity. Justice for all overthrows injustice. The redemptive community supersedes systems of gross social immorality. SNCC is convinced that by appealing to conscience and standing on the moral nature of human existence, nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities.

According to the SNCC Statement of Purpose:

1. What would a nonviolent "social order" be based on? \_\_\_\_\_  
Justice permeated by love
2. How does integration relate to that social order? \_\_\_\_\_  
It's a first step in a SNCC's social order
3. What can nonviolence bring about? courage displaces fear; love transforms hate. Acceptance dissipates prejudice; hope ends despair
4. How does nonviolence bring about those realities? nonviolence nurtures the atmosphere in which reconciliation and justice become actual possibilities

**CORE** was the Congress On Racial Equality. It was founded in 1942 and became key in organizing activism of the 1950s, and '60s, and was firmly committed to nonviolence. Read "CORE Rules for Action." Discuss with a partner how it adds to your understanding of nonviolence in the civil rights movement.

**WORKSHOPS IN NONVIOLENCE -- WHY?**  
 Written by Martin Oppenheimer  
 of Philadelphia CORE

In these few pages we have pulled together a few practical examples of situations which can be used in workshops on nonviolence, in training sessions prior to action, etc. Emphasis is on civil rights. We are indebted to Charles Walker, Middle Atlantic Regional College Secretary of American Friends Service Committee, for some of these ideas. We cannot emphasize sufficiently the importance of workshops and training sessions, especially just before actions are undertaken -- no matter how imperfect they may be. Some of the reasons for this are:

1. If you're going into action, in a potentially dangerous situation, you need to have confidence in yourself and in your buddies. In the workshop you have a chance to get to know yourself and your buddies and to see how you and they behave in a kind of mock action. You also get an idea of what to expect, and what you are afraid of -- and why. All this helps your morale, and the morale of the group. It makes for a better group, one which is more likely to succeed out in the streets.
2. Everybody has tensions. Especially those of us who are victims of segregation. When we get out in the streets we need to keep our personal tensions under control. But in a crisis, tensions build up. People blow up. In a long campaign people begin to "crack"; in other words, they suffer from "battle fatigue." In workshop situations everybody has a chance to blow off steam, to get rid of a lot of those tensions. Then when we get into the streets we are cooled off. Let loose in the workshop so you can be cool in the streets, make cool decisions, carry out a cool action.

**SAMPLE SCENARIOS FOR ROLE-PLAYING**

**VIII - The Picket Line**

Any group up to about 25 may participate in this. The instructor picks an issue and a situation, gives instructions for the group to walk an elongated circle, a few feet apart. It is helpful to have signs. Picket captains are assigned for each end of the line. An information officer is assigned; and a captain-in-charge is assigned. A variety of situations may be explored:

- 1 - harassment by segregationists, including roughing up, taking signs away, name-calling
- 2 - questions from passers-by
- 3 - volunteer unknown to the group arrives to join the line

5. What is the purpose of this document? \_\_\_\_\_  
to give directions on how to behave nonviolently - to learn through role playing different scenarios
6. Why did CORE believe it was important to train people in nonviolence? (two reasons) \_\_\_\_\_  
1. They need to have confidence in themselves and their partners  
2. To keep personal tensions under control so they will not blow up in anger.
7. What, if anything, surprises you about this document? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
Answers may vary, but students may be surprised by the detail the organization went to before going out to protests.
8. Re-read Dr. King's *Six Principles of Nonviolence*. Think about the integration of Little Rock Central High School and the Montgomery Bus Boycott. In what ways was each principal used in these protests? \_\_\_\_\_  
1. Courageous - Brave 2. For much of the rest of the country, protests gained support & understanding 3. Justice was achieved 4. suffering of the protesters transformed a nation 5. Protesters were peaceful, not characterized by hatred 6. In the end, justice prevailed

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

# THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

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## Discussion Questions

1. When and where did Martin Luther King deliver this speech? On what occasion? \_\_\_\_\_  
August 28, 1963, in Washington, DC., March on Washington to support Civil Rights Legislation
2. The most quoted sentences of King's speech repeats the phrase "I have a dream." What makes up the dream? How does it relate to the "American dream"? \_\_\_\_\_  
King is making a plea for justice and equality for all Americans in his "I have a dream" phrase. It relates to the American dream in that it is the embodiment of the very dream which this country was founded upon.
3. What does King mean when he states he has a dream that the nation "will live out the true meaning of its creed"? It is both ironic and important that King utilizes the phrase "let freedom ring" because the song "My Country 'Tis of Thee" refers to the US as a "sweet land of liberty" and this is the exact environment that King strived to create for Blacks in the United States during this time.
4. What criticisms does Dr. King have for American society? \_\_\_\_\_  
he speaks of injustice and oppression, of "vicious racists," and of a governor who denies and nullifies federal laws mandating equality.
5. King takes the phrase "let freedom ring" from the patriotic song "My Country 'Tis of Thee." Why is this important? How does he expand on this phrase? It is both ironic and important that King utilizes the phrase "let freedom ring" because the song "My Country 'Tis of Thee" refers to the US as a "sweet land of liberty" and this is the exact environment that King strived to create for Blacks in the United States during this time.
6. Do you think that King's dream has been fulfilled? Explain your response. \_\_\_\_\_  
Answers will vary but, African Americans have gained some legal, social, and economic equality but that injustice and racial discrimination still exist.